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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TO: Editors/News Directors
FROM: Mike Gabbard 547-7001 or 779-2680

GABBARD URGES FILIPINO VETERANS' BENEFITS

HONOLULU – September 27, 2004 - CITY COUNCILMEMBER MIKE GABBARD HAS introduced a resolution urging the Congress and the President to restore veterans' benefits to Filipino veterans of World War II.

"I'm calling on the United States Congress and the President to immediately enact legislation to restore veterans' benefits to Filipino veterans of World War II. How ironic that even as a new World War II Memorial was recently dedicated in Washington, D.C., many of the brave soldiers who fought for the United States in that war have not been given the benefits they so rightly deserve," Gabbard said. "It's a travesty that the lawmakers in our nation's capital rushed to be seen at the dedication of the Memorial but are nowhere to be seen when it comes to doing the right thing by the brave men who put their lives on the line for this great nation. Filipino soldiers fought bravely as members of the United States Armed Forces alongside U.S. citizens on the front lines of World War II and deserve the same benefits as their American brothers-in-arms."

On July 26, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order calling members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army and Philippine Scouts into the service of the United States Armed Forces of the Far East to defend the U.S. territory of the Philippines. Under the executive order, Filipinos who volunteered for the Philippine Commonwealth Army and Philippine Scouts were entitled to full veterans' benefits for active service during the War.

However, on February 18, 1946, the U.S. Congress enacted the First Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act, withdrawing U.S. veterans' status of Philippine Commonwealth Army veterans, thus denying their eligibility for U.S. veterans' benefits. In addition, on May 27, 1946, the U.S. Congress enacted the Second Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act imposing similar limitations regarding members of the Philippine Scouts.

Congress is currently considering the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2003, H.R. 677, the Filipino Veterans Benefit Improvement Act of 2003, S. 68, and the Filipino Veterans' Benefits Act of 2003, S.1213, which would restore full official recognition of and benefits to surviving Filipino veterans of World War II.

Copies of Resolution 04-267 are available at the City Clerk's office or by contacting Gabbard's office at 547-7001 or mgabbard@honolulu.gov. Mike Gabbard represents City Council District I that includes Ewa Beach, Kapolei, Honokai Hale, Ko Olina, and the entire Wai'anāe Coast.